COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED RULING ON THE VALIDITY OF *DIDERMOCERUS* BROOKES, 1828. Z.N.(S.) 1779

(see present volume, pages 55–56)

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Having received the application relating to *Didermocerus* Brookes, 1828, versus *Dicerorhinus* Gloger, 1841, I would like to comment as follows:

Unperturbed by Ellerman and Morrison-Scott's authoritative 1951 Checklist I have consistently if not conforming to the International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature used *Dicerorhinus* for the recent and subfossil Asiatic double-horned rhinoceros as well as for a number of Tertiary and Pleistocene African and Eurasiatic rhinocerotids, and I shall continue to do so. My reasons for this will be given. *Didermocerus* was very nearly exterminated in the literature, and I regret its recent revival. Incidentally, the opinion that the validity of *Didermocerus* is open to question as it appeared only in a sale catalogue, it should be said, was already voiced by Palmer in 1904 (*Index Generum Mammalium*. North American Fauna No. 23 : 230).

It should be emphasized that the extinct forms that have been placed with remarkable unanimity in *Dicerorhinus* by palaeomammalogists (including myself) almost certainly represent various shorter and longer lineages, and that none of them apparently is intimately bound up with the extant *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* (Fischer) whose pre-Pleistocene ancestry is as yet unknown. These fossil species are important stratigraphically, and certainly interrelated more closely with each other than with the species of rhinocerotids with which they may be found associated at the Old World Tertiary and later sites that yield them.

Among the surviving species of rhinocerotids we do find the greatest dental and skeletal resemblance to these fossil forms in the species *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* (Fischer), which may truly be said to represent a Miocene stage in the evolution of the dicerorhine rhinoceroses, and which is denfinitely not the most advanced among the cluster of species in the genus *Dicerorhinus* as understood by palaeontologists.

In palaeontological practice it is convenient to express morphological characteristics and even supposed relationships in the naming of fossils, and the use of the generic name *Dicerorhinus*, sanctioned by long use among specialists, both for the living and for the extinct forms indicates such a broad morphological similarity. It is to be regretted that in palaeontology the genus is often used too narrowly and practically takes over the function of the species in neontology, whereby its usefulness in indicating close resemblances of certain groups of species within a family is lost.

The application of a single generic name, *Dicerorhinus*, to the living Sumatran as well as to the extinct forms is, therefore, highly recommendable, and should be perpetuated.

Now that the Commission has taken the question of the generic name for the two-horned Asiatic rhinoceros to heart we have an excellent opportunity officially to sanction the use of *Dicerorhinus* if we adopt Alternative B as proposed in the above-cited 1967 application.

In conclusion, then, I would recommend that the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature decide to use its powers to invalidate once and for all Brookes' 1828 work and the name *Didermocerus* published therein, and place *Dicerorhinus* on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology.